

**Testimony of Karen Foley-Schain M.A., M.Ed. LPC,
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**Prepared for the Appropriations Committee: State Budget Hearing
Wednesday, February 18, 2009**

Good afternoon. My name is Karen Foley-Schain. I am the Executive Director of the State of Connecticut's Children's Trust Fund.

I am in an unusual position coming here today to present the Governor's budget recommendation for my agency.

In case you are wondering why, it is because the Governor's budget proposes to eliminate the Children's Trust Fund.

In her budget, the Governor recommends shutting the Trust Fund down, eliminating the staff positions we have and moving some of our programs to the Department of Children and Families.

So instead of the usual agency head review of the Governor's budget recommendation, I am here to tell you that the \$1.5 million the Governor's budget proposes to save by closing the Children's Trust Fund is too big a price for Connecticut's children and families to pay.

I am also here to tell you that moving the Trust Fund programs to DCF is not realistic or practical. DCF is already overburdened trying to meet its core missions of child protective services, children's mental health, and juvenile justice. It is in no position to handle yet another major initiative – especially a prevention mission essentially incompatible with child protective services.

Finally, I am here to tell you that I understand the major financial challenges facing the Governor and all of you in the General Assembly. I know that in the midst of the economic crisis we face, revenues are declining dramatically and that you must find ways to save money.

That is why I am not here empty handed today. In the spirit encouraged by the Governor in her budget address, I am here to put a specific alternative on the table.

And that alternative is this: If you must find savings from the state's efforts to support new families, infants and children, do so in an effective way.

If "reinventing government" is to be a real part of the solution to the budget crisis we face, let's take a close look at all prevention programs offered by various state agencies to see how we can bring them together – to save money AND better serve the families and children of this state.

While proposing to eliminate the Children's Trust Fund, the Governor's budget leaves intact \$25 million in spending for prevention programs that closely relate to core programs of the Trust Fund. These programs are housed at five state agencies: DPH, SDE, DSS, OPM, and at DCF itself.

Attached to my testimony you will find a listing of these programs and information on how they relate to the programs of the Trust Fund.

A review and reorganization of these numerous prevention programs can improve upon the delivery of services so important to so many people and so important to the future of our state – and a review and reorganization can also result in administrative and operational efficiencies that will reduce costs for taxpayers.

The alternative I propose to you is that these programs can be merged under the leadership of the Children's Trust Fund. In this way the state can benefit from the experience and expertise of the Children's Trust Fund

For the past 25 years, the Trust Fund has spearheaded Connecticut's effort to reach out to new families – especially to high-risk parents where the risk of abuse and neglect is very real. The support and assistance provided by the Trust Fund has made a real difference in people's lives.

The secret of the Trust Fund's success is a well functioning organization with a highly trained and experienced staff that we should take advantage of - not eliminate.

The Trust Fund staff is responsible for planning, site selection, budgeting, policy development, site performance appraisals, data analysis and quality assurance, contract content and compliance.

In order to effectively implement programs and achieve strong results, the staff also provides needed training and direction to the community-based organizations and other partners. They examine program outcomes, work with sites to solve problems and achieve best practice.

It takes the leadership of a focused organization to work effectively with numerous community agencies and others to achieve and maintain strong results. That is exactly the kind of leadership the Trust Fund and its staff provide day in and day out.

The Trust Fund's efforts to ensure the quality of its programs have made it a leader in the state's Results Based Accountability program. The Results Based Accountability reports for two of the Trust Fund's major initiatives are attached to my testimony.

The Connecticut Children's Trust Fund has just one goal - to ensure the positive growth and development of Connecticut's children. The agency's programs, rigorously evaluated for efficacy, are unique to Connecticut. They reach more than 10,000 families every year. The programs include intensive family support for high-risk vulnerable parents, efforts to identify and intervene early when children are at risk of behavioral and developmental problems, approaches to help young people stay in school and make wise choices in their lives.

Examples of these efforts include:

- *Nurturing Families*, a state-of-the-art home visiting program for vulnerable first-time mothers to help them meet the demands of parenting.
- An innovative approach to encourage fathers to become more involved with their children in a positive way.
- A major research initiative to offer and study in-home cognitive behavioral therapy to treat maternal depression that is being conducted with top experts in the field.
- A cutting-edge program to prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome that has received national attention.
- *Help Me Grow*, a program to identify and intervene early when developmental concerns are identified - a program that is being replicated through a national foundation by organizations across the country.
- And the *Stranger You Know ...* a program that is breaking ground in the way we think about and approach child sexual abuse.
- Parent Leadership Training, a far reaching collaborative effort to train parents to be effective advocates for their children, themselves, and their communities – and others.

All of you face many long days of budget deliberations which I understand will involve many painful decisions.

As the budget process unfolds, I urge you to keep in mind the important mission of the Trust Fund. To keep in mind that we don't just simply write checks and put them in the mail to groups that run our programs in the community. And I urge you to keep in mind innovative options I have described that will achieve savings and launch a new era in providing important prevention programs for our state and its families.

Thank you.

Connecticut Children's Trust Fund Analysis:

**Cost Effective Proposal to Consolidate and Strengthen
State Prevention Efforts**

**Requested by Representative Gail Hamm
Submitted February 10, 2009**

Cost Effective Proposal to Consolidate and Strengthen State Prevention Efforts

In her proposed budget, Governor M. Jodi Rell recommends eliminating the Children's Trust Fund and its staff and transferring some of its programs to the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

The Governor's budget says the proposed elimination of the Trust Fund would save \$1.5 million a year. This is a very high price for families and children to pay for what amounts to a small savings.

During the past 25 years, the Trust Fund has helped thousands of families across the state by identifying, developing and implementing effective programs to prevent child abuse and neglect and other problems that negatively impact children.

The Trust Fund brings theory to practice by applying research, testing new ideas, and building the capacity of community based organizations to be effective in their work. The Trust Fund has gained national recognition for its efforts and the support of national and local foundations and donors.

It takes the leadership of a focused organization with a dedicated and experienced staff to work effectively with numerous community organizations and others to achieve this.

It is unrealistic to think successful and valuable prevention programs for families can be transferred to and run by DCF. As the state agency with responsibility for child protective services, children's mental health and juvenile justice, DCF is already overburdened meeting multiple core missions.

There are ways to achieve savings needed to balance the budget and preserve programs important to families. One alternative strategy is to bring together numerous prevention programs scattered among a number of state agencies in a logical, cost effective way.

Several programs could be smartly and effectively integrated into the Trust Fund. These include programs directly related to the Trust Fund's core initiatives, including several family support programs for vulnerable parents, efforts to identify and intervene early when children are at risk of behavioral and developmental problems, approaches to help young people stay in school and make wise choices in their lives.

This consolidation would pull together prevention programs currently in the Departments of Children and Families, Social Services, Education and Public Health. The Governor has proposed more than \$20 million in state funding for these programs. In addition, \$5 million in federal funds is also available to support some of these programs.

Funds equaling or surpassing the savings offered by the Governor through elimination of the Trust Fund can be found by reorganizing and streamlining the administration of these programs.

Children's Trust Fund: Summary

The Connecticut Children's Trust Fund has one goal - to ensure the positive growth and development of Connecticut's children.

This goal has led the Trust Fund to finding the most effective ways to prevent child abuse and neglect and support nurturing families.

The agency's programs, rigorously evaluated for efficacy, are unique to Connecticut. They include Nurturing Families, a state of the art home visiting program in which professionals visit vulnerable first-time mothers to help them meet the demands of parenting and an innovative approach to encourage fathers to become more involved with their children in a positive way.

A recent cutting-edge program to prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome received national attention in the media. Another Trust Fund program, Help Me Grow, is being replicated through a national foundation by organizations across the country. The Trust Fund's research-practitioner model for program development has been presented at several national conferences and its Stranger You Know ... program is breaking ground in the way we think about and approach child sexual abuse.

To achieve these results, the staff provides needed training and direction to contracted community-based organizations and other partners. They examine program outcomes, work with sites to solve problems and achieve best practice.

The Trust Fund has also cultivated a network of physicians and child development experts to help develop – and utilize – programs that make a real difference in the lives of children and their families. This public-private partnership is crucial to the agency's success. In addition to federal and state monies, the Children's Trust Fund is supported by grants and donations sought and managed by the staff.

The Children's Trust Fund was initially formed in 1983 as program of the Department of Children and Families. Overtime the Commissioner and the Connecticut General Assembly recognized the significant difference in the work of the Department and the Trust Fund. In 1997, in response to this recognition, the Children's Trust Fund was established as a state agency to spearhead prevention efforts in the state.

A description of the Children's Trust Fund programs follows. A chart of other state prevention program and their alignment to the Trust Fund's current efforts also follows.

Children's Trust Fund: Major Prevention Initiatives

The Nurturing Families Network (NFN): Provides intensive home visiting services to high-risk families at a critical time in their lives - when their first child is born. This program reduces the incidence of child abuse and neglect, improves parent child relationships and leads to better outcomes for both parents and children.

The services are provided to families giving birth at all of the twenty-nine birthing hospitals in the state. Services are offered at forty-two locations with expanded programs in the cities of Hartford and New Haven. Roughly thirteen hundred new parents are receiving home visits under this program. About fifty percent of the mothers are teens. The average father is 21 years old.

The Nurturing Families Network provides Nurturing Parenting groups that are open to the community. The Nurturing Parenting group program has received proven program status through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency.

In addition to state funding this program received grant support from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, several local United Ways, and municipal governments.

Family School Connection: Home visiting and support services to families whose school age children (5-12) are struggling with truancy, behavioral or academic issues at school – and are likely to be struggling at home.

Family School Connection is modeled after the highly successful Nurturing Families home-visiting program and is based in Hartford, Middletown, Windham, Norwich and New Haven.

Help Me Grow: Prevention program for all children who experience the developmental challenges that go hand-and-hand with growing up. Children who are facing behavioral, learning or other developmental issues are connected to local programs that can provide expertise and assistance.

Help Me Grow received approximately 3,000 calls last year and 86% percent of families were connected to services. The Help Me Grow program does this by maximizing use of the resources available for families across the state.

The Children's Trust Fund received a grant award from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation to enhance the capacity of Help Me Grow to reach and engage hard to reach families. These include families who do not have a phone or who have complex needs. The Trust Fund is has recently piloted this effort in city of Hartford. In addition the Commonwealth Fund in Boston is funding the national replication of Help Me Grow.

Family Empowerment programs: These programs bring a focus on parenting and family dynamics to parents struggling with substance abuse, domestic violence, incarceration or other problems in several community and institutional settings.

Parent Leadership Training: Training to develop parental leadership skills to effectively advocate for their children, themselves and the issues they care about in their communities. This effort is a public-private partnership with the William Casper Graustein Memorial Fund.

Shaken Baby Prevention: The Trust Fund staff has trained medical professionals, community providers, and middle and high school students on methods to prevent shaken baby syndrome. This effort has led to ongoing programs and research efforts within several hospitals and organizations.

The Stranger You Know: A child sexual abuse prevention program helps parents see patterns of behavior that represent danger and offers steps they can take to keep their children safe. To date the program has reached 1,000 parents in Connecticut.

Family Development Training and Credentialing: The Children's Trust Fund is working with the University of Connecticut Center for the Study of Culture, Health and Human Development to teach human service providers new skills for working with families that help service providers engage families on a voluntary basis before they become involved with state mandated services.

This year the Trust Fund is working with the 12 Community Action Agencies (CAP) in Connecticut to provide this training to more than 500 front line and leadership staff. Connecticut has credentialed roughly 600 students in this program.

Next Steps:

The Children's Trust Fund will work with researchers at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital to offer and study an in-home cognitive behavioral therapy for treating mothers with depression that are participating in the Nurturing Families Network.

A second area of focus is on fathers and men. The Children's Trust Fund is researching and piloting a program component within the Nurturing Families Network specifically for fathers and men who are significant in the lives of children participating in the program.

A third initiative, Strengthening Families would follow children who are participating in the Nurturing Families Network into the homes of informal kith and kin providers. Under this effort, the Trust Fund will help the mothers become acquainted with the childcare centers in their communities. In instances when a mother chooses informal care, the staff will work with the provider to ensure a positive experience.

Possible Integration of State Agency Programs with the Children's Trust Fund

The following chart shows the numerous prevention programs scattered among a number of state agencies that could be consolidated within the Children's Trust Fund in a logical, cost effective manner.

The programs cited below directly relate to the Trust Fund's core initiatives, including several family support programs for vulnerable parents, efforts to identify and intervene early when children are at risk of behavioral and developmental problems, approaches to help young people stay in school and make wise choices in their lives.

Program	Current State Agency	Aligns with Trust Fund program and population served	Proposed Budget FY 2010
Early Childhood Services: Parenting support for at risk parents of young children	DCF	Nurturing Families Network	\$536,162 - state
Maternal and Infant Health: Case management for at risk parents of young children	DPH	Nurturing Families Network	\$200,200 – federal
Young Parents Program: Parenting support and child care for at risk teen parents	SDE	Nurturing Families Network	\$229,330 - state
Healthy Start: Case management for at risk parents of young children	DPH	Nurturing Families Network	\$1,538,097 - state
Family Resource Centers: School and home based parent education for parents of young children	SDE	Nurturing Families Network Family School Connection	\$6,041,488 - state

Even Start: Parenting education focus on literacy	SDE	Nurturing Families Network Family School Connection	\$7,516 – state \$656,164 - federal
Early Reading Success: Priority school districts – children falling below grade level	SDE	Family School Connection	\$2,314,380 - state
Head Start and Early Head Start Collaborative: supports early childhood and home based programs for new parents	DSS	Nurturing Families Network Help Me Grow Strengthening Families	\$93,367 – state \$ 125,000 - federal
Early Childhood Consultation Programs: Early identification and intervention with behavioral problems in child care settings	DCF	Help Me Grow Nurturing Families Strengthening Families	\$2,397,265 -state
Positive Youth Development: Family support school age children 6-13	DCF	Family School Connection	\$830,482 -state
Suicide Prevention: Recommendations to DCF	DCF	All	\$43,145 - state
Youth Violence - Suicide Prevention: Professional development	DPH	All	\$4,090 – state \$439,754 - federal
Pregnancy Prevention: grants to communities	DPH	Nurturing Families Network	\$35,576 - state

Work/Learn programs: Positive youth development	DCF	Nurturing Families Network	\$595,141 – state \$786,124 - federal
Governor's Urban Youth Violence Prevention Program: Positive youth development	OPM	Nurturing Families Network	\$1,000,000 – state \$580,544 - federal
Statewide Service Delivery Agents: Build capacity for prevention efforts	DMHAS	Family Development Provider and Parent Networks	\$131,991 - state \$1,403,042 - federal
Neighborhood Youth Center Program: Positive youth development	OPM	Nurturing Families Network	\$1,149,480 – state
Community Life Skills: Positive youth development	DCF	Nurturing Families Network	\$595,141 – state \$786,124 - federal
Youth Service Bureaus: Prevention and intervention services for youth	SDE	Nurturing Families Network	\$2,910,732 - state
Title V Community prevention Program: Support to local governments	OPM	All	\$43,360 - federal
Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Program: grants to local community to prevent juvenile delinquency	OPM	All	\$601,000 - federal
		Total State Funding	\$20,453,838
		Total Federal Funding	\$ 5, 621,312
		State & Federal	\$26,075,150

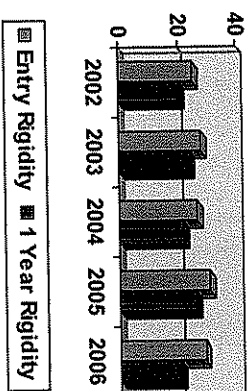
Program Report Card: Nurturing Families Network

Program Purpose: The Nurturing Families Network is a statewide system of continuous care designed to promote positive parenting and reduce incidences of child maltreatment.

Contributes to Population Quality of Life Result: Young children in Connecticut will have quality parental care that meet their needs and will be healthy, developmentally on track, and ready to learn.

Performance Measure 1: Positive change in mothers' expectations as measured by the Child Abuse Potential Inventory (CAPI) Rigidity subscale.

Entry and 1 Year Outcome Data on the Capi by Year Family Entered NFN



Story Behind Measure 1: Families participating in NFN home visiting show significant reductions on the rigidity subscale of the CAPI within 1 year of program participation. These data indicate that families have less rigid parenting attitudes and are less likely to treat their children forcefully.

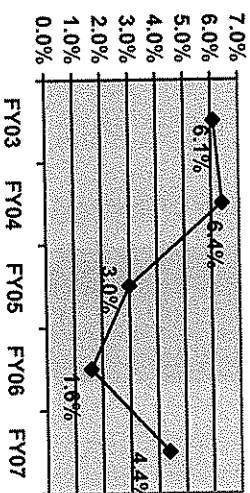
Proposed actions to turn the curve: Program services focus on improving parenting attitudes and behavior, promoting child development, and decreasing the likelihood of child maltreatment using curricula that focuses on positive parenting practices and

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education. We expect to see significant changes on the CAPI rigidity subscale.

Performance Measure 2: Rates of substantiated maltreatment among program participants.

Rates of Child Maltreatment in the NFN Program



Story Behind Measure 2: The above graph shows the annualized rates of maltreatment rates for the past 5 years. Rates of substantiated abuse increased in 2007 as compared with the previous two years but are still low when compared with rates of 20-25% reported in studies with similarly high-risk mothers who did not receive home visitation services.

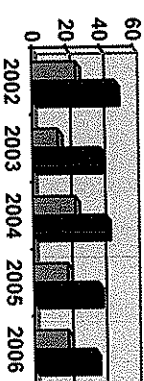
Proposed actions to turn the curve: NFN home visitation model uses the most recent science on child development and parenting practices with an infrastructure

Nurturing Families Network

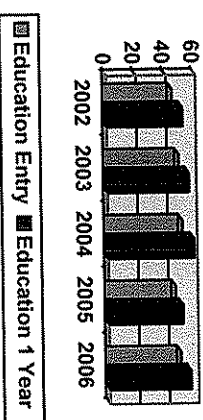
for recruiting high-risk families and ensuring quality and consistent program implementation. We expect to continue to see low rates of child maltreatment.

Performance Measure 3: Change in rates of employment and educational attainment after one year of program involvement.

Percentage of Mothers Employed By Year Family Started Program



Percentage of Mothers with a High School Education by Year Family Started Program



Program Report Card: Nurturing Families Network

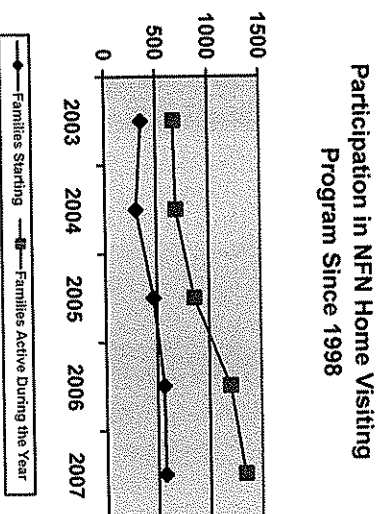
Program Purpose: The Nurturing Families Network is a statewide system of continuous care designed to promote positive parenting and reduce incidences of child maltreatment.

Contributes to Population Quality of Life Result: Young children in Connecticut will have quality parental care that meet their needs and will be healthy, developmentally on track, and ready to learn.

Story Behind Measure 3: The employment and education data above shows the program entry and 1 year rates for families entering the program for the past 5 years. Families show significant change in employment and education within their first year of program participation. For 2007, 36% of mothers were employed compared with 20% at program entry. In addition, 55% of these mothers had at least a high school education compared with 48% at program entry. These outcomes suggest that home visitors are helping families to build more assets and become more self-sufficient.

Proposed actions to turn the curve: Because many of the NFN parents are constantly faced with unemployment and underemployment, as well as social, cultural and sometimes language barriers, home visitors use a two generation approach: they emphasize support for the mothers' developmental trajectory as well as the children's. We expect to continue to see significant change in the areas of employment and education.

Performance Measure 4:
Participation and retention rates in NFN home visiting program.



Story Behind Measure 4:

There has been a 50% increase in the percentage of families served in the NFN home visiting program from 2003 to 2007. The increase was more pronounced in 2005 and 2006 due to the Hartford expansion. At the end of 2007, there was another increase due to the expansion in New Haven. In addition, families at program sites that have provided services since at least 2003 (the maximum five-year program time) have participated in home visitation on average for 22 months.

Proposed actions to turn the curve: The Nurturing Families Network is operating out of all 29 birthing hospitals and thus has the infrastructure for going

to scale in Connecticut. Even as the program has expanded and the number of families served has substantially increased, program evaluation continues to show many positive program aspects and outcomes. The positive impact is related to: the population being served (low SES, often young, first-time mothers with low coping skills at program entry); the onset of services (prenatal or at birth); the combination of services (case management and curricula that targets specific issues and outcomes); and the intensity of services (ability to consistently and frequently engage mothers and families). Once families are screened and recruited, NFN is well-equipped in terms of facilitative administrative support, performance monitoring to ensure fidelity to the model, and home visitation staff training and supervising to address risk factors. In addition, we are in the process of strengthening the program's focus on recruiting fathers, and will also be implementing a pilot program to test the efficacy of in-home depression treatment to complement NFN home visiting.

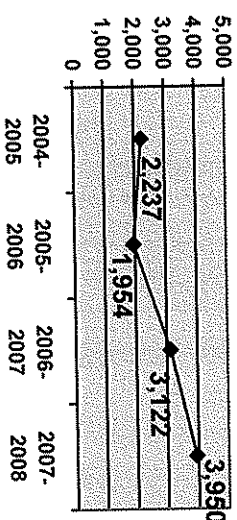
Program Report Card: Help Me Grow

Program Purpose: Children who are facing behavioral, learning, and other developmental difficulties are connected to local programs.

Contributes to Population Quality of Life Result: All Connecticut children will be healthy, developmentally on track, and meet their full potential.

Performance Measure 1: Number of referrals to programs on behalf of families.

Referrals on behalf of HMG Families

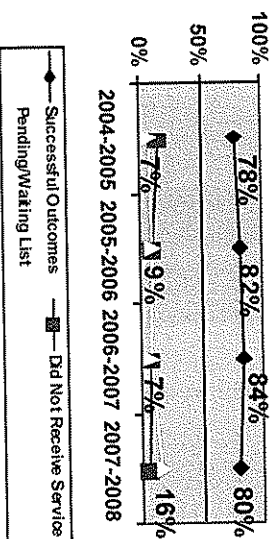


Story behind the baseline: *Help Me Grow* care coordinators increased the number of referrals to programs on behalf of families by 27% from last year. This increase, and the positive trend over the past 4 years, indicates *Help Me Grow* staff are becoming more adept at finding resources for families.

Proposed actions to turn the curve: Continue with training and supervision of care coordination, community networking activities, and updating the Child Development Infoline database on program services and information throughout the State.

Performance Measure 2: Outcomes of family referrals for services and program information.

Help Me Grow Outcomes



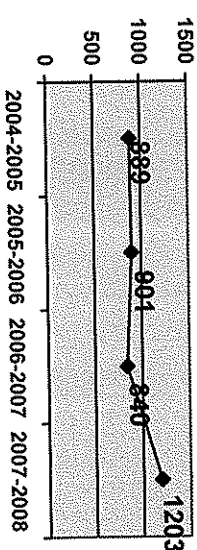
Story behind the baseline: Rates of successfully connecting families to needed services are high. Eighty percent of service needs were addressed for the 2007-2008 year. The slight decrease in successful outcomes (from 84% in previous year to 80% in past year) is balanced by the increase in outcomes that are pending (from 7% in the previous year to 16% in past year). The majority of pending outcomes are for situations where families are seeking an evaluation for their child (29%) or for children with special health care needs (48%).

Proposed actions to turn the curve: A systematic process for identifying and tracking gaps and barriers in services was established during the past year. At

the end of the program year, these data will be analyzed for the different communities within Connecticut and presented for review by all interested stakeholders.

Performance Measure 3: Number of families entering the Ages and Stages monitoring system.

Active Ages & Stages Monitoring:
Number of families entering each year



Story behind the baseline: There was a dramatic 43% increase in the number of families entering the program in the past year from 840 families in the former year to 1,203 families. This increase is explained by the increase in outreach and training to pediatricians. The majority of these referrals to Ages and Stages have come from several new pediatrician practices with one practice in particular, in the Bristol area, referring a large number of families to the monitoring program.

Program Report Card: Help Me Grow

Program Purpose: Children who are facing behavioral, learning, and other developmental difficulties are connected to local programs.

Contributes to Population Quality of Life Result: All Connecticut children will be healthy, developmentally on track, and meet their full potential.

Proposed actions to turn the curve:

Continue outreach and efforts to raise awareness on Ages & Stages monitoring program through ongoing trainings for pediatricians, other child care providers, and social service agencies. As much as possible, identify and track where training has occurred, who is utilizing the program, and where training is most needed. Current and future program capacity issues also need to be taken into consideration as part of efforts and planning for increased utilization of the program.